

customers in a cafeteria, including the parents of Suzanna Gratia Hupp. She owned a handgun, which she had to leave in her automobile, because Texas did not permit the carrying of concealed handguns at that time, and she contended that she could have saved her parents and others had she had the handgun with her. Around the same time as the cafeteria killing, Gov. Ann Richards vetoed a bill to mandate the issuance of permits to carry concealed firearms to law-abiding applicants, and her political opponent campaigned against her on that issue, winning the election. The new governor signed into law a similar bill: His name was George W. Bush.

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Letter From Wisconsin

by Sean Scallon

Harvest Moon



I first noticed it as I drove past, heading for one of those small-town Wisconsin festivals, this one celebrating the largest earthen dam in the Midwest (by their claim, of course) nestled in the *stanitsa* of Spring Valley.

The whole lawn was filled with antique tractors, the kind you might see at a local fair or car-club show. Usually, such displays are publicized in the community calendar of our newspaper or posted on the bulletin boards of one of the bars, grocery stores, or laundromats around town. I couldn't remember seeing this one, but I figured I could swing past on my way back on Highway 63 after spending the morning among the dam worshippers. The *Herald* could always use a few more snapshots.

Returning later that morning, I saw that the display was still there, this time with crowds surrounding it. The Majeski farm in Martell Township was the site of the South Lawn Steam Tractor Days (or, rather, day). All sorts of ancient steam tractors from the turn of the century, preserved by local collectors, were there for

those interested in catching a glimpse of the past or partaking of the snacks provided by the United Methodist Church Women's Auxiliary.

I clicked away with my camera at the two giant steam tractors that were the star attractions. One was an old Minneapolis-Moline Model; the other, a behemoth made by J.I. Case. One was set up next to a sawmill display, while the other was near an even more ancient threshing machine, both connected by conveyor belts that looked like giant rubber bands. Two workmen tossed in wood and worked the valves like characters in a runaway-train movie. The tractors could travel not much more than five miles per hour, but they belched enough smoke to make the belts turn, the gears crank, the blades buzz, and the threshing machine thresh. Two people climbed onto haystacks with pitchforks in hand, depositing the hay into the threshing machine loaders, where it was chopped into bits and shot out the other side through a blower.

"This is a special occasion," one of the collectors told me, pointing toward the Case model. "This used to be on display at the Pierce County Fair, and they would hold threshing demonstrations all the time. For the last 20 years or so, it's been touring fair and festival sites in Minnesota, so this is its return debut back in Pierce County."

The Case was painted in the sort of gaudy industrial style that you find on any product made around the turn of century or on an old stock or bond certificate. On the front, above the boiler, the claws of the Case Eagle (the company's logo) clutched the world, while on the side, in bright red, yellow, and cream lettering, the tractor announced to everyone that it had indeed been made by J.I. Case in Racine, Wisconsin. A picture in an oval portrayed the town, complete with the smokestacks of the factory and the homes of its workers next to it. For over a hundred years, that had been an accurate picture of the city, until global agribusiness company New Holland recently bought out Case. They stopped making tractors in Racine, and robbed the old industrial city of 90,000 of its identity.

Threshing meant the beginning of the harvest season, when green turned to gold or light shades of brown. Life has a rhythm, and harvest time is one of the songs we sing. People who plant gardens or farm fields in the spring know that, come fall, it's time to bring the fruit indoors and store it away for winter. In-

stinctively, they know it—without aid of a clock, calendar, or e-mail message. Just look outdoors. Nowadays, with the absurdly low prices he gets for his commodity, it may profit a farmer to plant nothing, lest he lose money with all of his expenses for fuel, fertilizer, pesticides, and equipment, even if his yield is bountiful. But then he would cease to be a farmer, which has happened to many. Those who remain have to plant, if only to live on to see better days to sell the grain that lies dormant in their storage elevators. That's why, when you travel the backroads of Wisconsin at night in the fall, you will see the lights of the combines, tractors, and grain trucks still working the fields well after sundown. That's why some grain-elevator employees may spend their winters doing absolutely nothing but watching soap operas, but their autumns working round the clock. As long as we have fields to sow, the show must go on.

Very little of our agricultural past is still remembered by the urbanized and suburbanized masses who think food comes from the grocery store. There are at least three turning points in American history: 1776 when it all began, 1860 when it all changed, and 1941 when it *really* all changed. Besides being the beginning of the War Between the States, 1860 was also the last year our nation's farms outproduced our nation's factories. But those factories worked together with the farmers not only to feed a nation but the world as well, and created the surplus population that made our great cities swell. That was before the arrival of the managerial classes after World War II, who showed little interest in either farm or factory—and, thus, both withered.

Yet our school year is still based on the old agricultural model, they still publish *Poor Richard's Almanac*, and the urban farmers' markets still survive. And we still celebrate the bounty of the land at Thanksgiving and in the church bazaars, ice-cream socials, and fall festivals. Once again, I attended Holy Trinity Russian Orthodox Church's Fall Festival in the wilds of southwest Barron County, where my newspaper's publisher is a deacon. Girlfriend in tow, we witnessed the mysterious—if not overwhelming—liturgy of St. John Chrysostom and then enjoyed a wonderful meal of cabbage rolls, cranberry sauce, ham, rolls, milk, fruit punch, mashed potatoes, cheese from the local Clayton cheese factories, and—of course—the many, many pies

for which I brought a large tub of Cool Whip for all to enjoy. This fall festival has become quite popular, with over 400 guests attending, much more than the little church hall can handle all at once. Besides the neighbors, attendees include such luminaries as former U.S. Sen. Gaylord Nelson, who is originally from nearby Clear Lake, and Amery Mayor and former State Assemblyman Harvey Stower, "The Conscience of the Assembly" and a friend from the state capital days of my youth.

For the rural churches where I come from, such events are a very important part not just of their heritage but of their routine. As cometh the harvest, so cometh the fall festivals. Whether the suburban megachurches have fall festivals, I do not know. I suppose it would be hard to feed so many thousands of attendees; but really, what would be there to celebrate? They have no tie to the land, to the people that till it, or to the rhythms of the harvest. They are merely a transit stop for our transitory population. The harvest and the fall festival are for those they have left behind.

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Letter From Corsica

by Curtis Cate

Ethnicity as a Way of Life



Years ago, an Hungarian friend of mine, eager to finish a novel, decided to go to Corsica to find the peace and quiet he craved. Some six months later, after he returned to Paris, I asked him if, during his stay, he had picked up any Corsican. Not much, he admitted, except for a phrase he had often heard and had found appealing for its curious sonority: "*U lu brutu!*"

My friend's subsequent explanations as to just what those three words meant were vague in the extreme. Apparently, *brutu* was one of those convenient, all-purpose words people—more particularly, the young—invent to express varying degrees of enthusiasm—such as *formidable* in French, *fabellhaft* ("fabulous") in German, *estupendo* or *Caramba!* in Spanish, and everything from "wizard,"

"super," "terrific," and the latest, singularly weak-kneed superlative—"brilliant"—now used by the British. I was reminded of the "*Que brutal!*" I had heard in Mexico at a time when the *bamba* was first being danced—in 1946, no less!—and which was no more "brutal" in its connotations than the popular English superlative "terrific!"

The four repetitive *u* (as in our "you") sounds in "*U lu brutu!*" clearly linked it to the ancient Provençal, more closely derived from the Latin than modern French, in which the words would have to be phonetically (and more clumsily) transcribed as "*Ou lou broutou!*" I have no idea who invented this phrase or if he could in any sense be considered a "Provençal," but its mere existence could provide a convenient argument for those French men and women who like to think that the island of Corsica has "indissoluble" ties linking it to the "*hexagone*" of mainland France.

Ever since last July, when Prime Minister Lionel Jospin, in desperate search of some miraculous way of "pacifying" the restive island of Corsica, caved in to the demands of certain "nationalists" by outlining a four-year plan designed to allow the inhabitants to "rule themselves" with the aid of a local mini-parliament and to have the Corsican "language" taught in all its schools, French newspapers, like the radio and TV channels, have been deluged with articles, interviews, and speeches expressing every conceivable nuance of opinion—from the forthright refusal to make any vital concessions manifested by French Minister of the Interior Jean-Pierre Chevènement, who reluctantly resigned from the government rather than condone a policy likely to destabilize France and undermine the "indivisibility" of the Republic, to the casual indifference of Raymond Barre, a former prime minister and now outgoing mayor of Lyon, who more or less intimated that, if they so wished, the Corsicans should be allowed to go their own way and stew in their own juice.

Not the least curious aspect of the resultant debates has been the striking way in which they have cut across traditional party lines. In his adamant opposition to concessions that would, in his opinion, lead to an eventual independence and to the triumph in Corsica of a drug-peddling mafia, Chevènement, an outspokenly left-wing Socialist, was immediately joined by another former minister of the interior, Charles Pasqua, who (de-

spite being of Corsican origin) is an equally outspoken archconservative ex-Gaullist. Early on in the debate, two former French foreign ministers—Jean-Raymond Bernard and Hervé de Charette—appealed (in the pages of *Le Figaro*) to Jacques Chirac, asking the president, supposed (according to the terms of the constitution) to be the "guarantor" of the "integrity of the Republic," to throw the full weight and prestige of his high office into the battle against the Socialist prime minister—something Chirac has shown no signs of doing, preferring (as he privately explained to members of his entourage) to see Lionel Jospin "mire himself up to the chin" in a (Corsican) bog of his own making.

The Corsicans themselves are profoundly divided on the subject. At least two mayors—Emile Zuccarelli, the left-wing mayor of Bastia (near the north-eastern tip of the island), and Dominique Bucchini, mayor of Sartène (in the south)—promptly joined Henri Emmanuelli, a former secretary general of the Socialist Party, in supporting Chevènement; and when José Rossi, a "Liberal" deputy in the French National Assembly and the foremost advocate of the four-year "peace plan," rashly tried to "seize" the mayoralty of Ajaccio from its incumbent, he was soundly trounced by the "Bonapartist" Marc Marcangeli. A scathing critique by Charles Lambroschini, the foreign editor of *Le Figaro*, accused Rossi of wanting to make himself the Prince Rainier of a Monaco-type principality; and in a pathetic plea for tolerance, Jean-Pierre Colombani, the editor-in-chief of the distinctly left-wing and fashionably anti-bourgeois *Le Monde*, sought to remind his readers that it was the "*jacobine*" Robespierre who had hailed Corsica's independence in the early 1790's—actually, it was the anything but "*jacobine*" Mirabeau—and Napoleon who had ruthlessly suppressed it toward the end of that momentous revolutionary and postrevolutionary decade.

The most intriguing aspect of this debate has been its almost classic exemplification of the highly contemporary phenomenon of "linguistic drift." When a "progressive" buzzword is invented, it quickly acquires a social momentum of its own. Before they begin to realize exactly what is happening, even its adversaries end up the hapless victims of their enemies' vocabulary. This is what has happened with the so-called "Corsican language," just as it has happened with